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"Perpetual Vigilance is the Price of Liberty," for "Power is always Stealing from the Many to the Few."

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## Speech of the Hon. J. C. Calhoun On the Slavery Question, DELIVERED IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES, March 4, 1850.

I have, Senators, believed from the first that the agitation of the subject of slavery would, if not prevented by some timely and effective measure, end in disunion. Ever since that opinion, I have, on all proper occasions, endeavored to call the attention of both of the two great parties which divide the country, to adopt some measures to prevent so great a disaster, but without success. The agitation has been permitted to proceed, with almost no attempt to resist, until it has reached a period when it can no longer be disguised or denied that the Union is in danger. You have thus far forced upon you the greatest and the gravest question that can ever come under your consideration. How can the Union be preserved?

To give a satisfactory answer to this mighty question, it is indispensable to have an accurate and thorough knowledge of the nature and the character of the cause by which the Union is endangered. Without such knowledge, it is impossible to pronounce, with any certainty, by what measure it can be saved; just as it would be impossible for a physician to pronounce in the case of some dangerous disease, with any certainty, by what remedy the patient could be saved, without similar knowledge of the nature and character of the disease. The first question, then, presented for the consideration, in the investigation I propose to make in order to obtain such knowledge, is—What is it that has endangered the Union?

To this question there can be but one answer; that the immediate cause is the almost universal discontent which pervades all the States composing the southern section of the Union. This widely extended discontent is not of recent origin. It commenced with the agitation of the slavery question, and has been increasing ever since. The next question, going one step further back, is—What has caused this widely diffused and almost universal discontent?

It is a great mistake to suppose, as is by some, that it originated with demagogues, who excited the discontent with the intention of aiding their personal advancement, or with the disappointed ambition of certain politicians, who resorted to it as the means of retrieving their fortunes. On the contrary, all the great political influences of the section were arrayed against excitement, and exerted to the utmost to keep the people quiet. The great mass of the people of the South were divided, as in the other section, into Whigs and Democrats. The leaders and the press of both parties in the South were very solicitous to prevent excitement and to preserve quiet; because it was seen that the effects of the former would necessarily tend to weaken, if not destroy, the political ties which bind them with their respective parties in the other section of the Union. Those who know the strength of party spirit which this cause excited against agitation and in favor of preserving quiet. But, as great as it was, it was not sufficiently so to prevent the wide spread discontent which now pervades the section. No; some cause far deeper and more powerful than the one supposed, must exist, to account for discontent so wide and deep. The question then, recurs—What is the cause of this discontent? It will be found in the belief of the Southern States, as prevalent as the discontent itself, that they cannot remain, as things now are, consistently with honor and safety, in the Union. The next question to be considered, is—What has caused this belief?

One of the causes is, undoubtedly, to be traced to the long continued agitation of the slavery question on the part of the North, and the many aggressions which they have made on the rights of the South during the time. I will not enumerate them at present as it will be done hereafter in its proper place. There is another lying back of it, with which this is intimately connected, that may be regarded as the great and primary cause. That is to be found in the fact that the equilibrium between the two sections in the government, as it stood when the Constitution was ratified and the Government put in action, has been destroyed. At that time there was nearly a perfect equilibrium between the two, which afforded ample means to each to protect itself against the aggression of the other; but, as it now stands, one section has the exclusive power of controlling the government, which leaves the other without any adequate means of protecting itself against its encroachment and oppression. To place this subject distinctly before you, I have, Senators, prepared a brief statistical statement, showing the relative weight of the two sections in the Government, under the first census of 1790 and the last census of 1840.

According to the former, the population of the United States, including Vermont, Kentucky and Tennessee, which then were in their incipient condition of becoming States, but were not actually admitted, amounted to 3,929,827. Of this number the northern States had 1,977,097 and the southern States 1,952,730, making a difference of only 25,827 in favor of the former States. The number of States, including Vermont, Kentucky, and Tennessee, were sixteen; of which eight, including Vermont, belonged to the Northern section, and eight, including Kentucky and Tennessee, to the southern, making an equal division of the States between the two sections under the first census. There was a small preponderance in the House of Representatives, and in the electoral college, in favor of the northern, owing to the fact that, according to the provisions of the Constitution, in

estimating federal numbers, five slaves count but three; but it was too small to effect sensibly the perfect equilibrium, which existed at the time. Such was the equality of the two sections when the States composing them agreed to enter into a Federal Union. Since then the equilibrium between them has been greatly disturbed.

According to the last census the aggregate population of the United States amounted to 17,063,357, of which the northern section contained 9,728,929, and the southern 7,334,427, making a difference, in round numbers, of 2,400,000. The number of States has increased from sixteen to twenty six, making an addition of ten States. In the meantime the position of Delaware has become doubtful as to which section she properly belongs. Considering her as neutral, the Northern States will have thirteen and the Southern States twelve, making a difference in the Senate of two Senators in favor of the former.

According to the apportionment, under the census of 1840, there were 223 members of the House of Representatives, of which the northern States had 135, and the southern States (considering Delaware as neutral) 87, making a difference in favor of the former in the House of Representatives of 48. The difference in the Senate added to this, gives to the North, in the electoral college, a majority of 59. Since the census of 1840, four States have been added to the Union— Iowa, Wisconsin, Florida and Texas. They leave the difference in the Senate as it stood when the census was taken; but add to the side of the North in the House, making the present majority in the House in its favor of 59 and in the electoral college of 52.

The result of the whole is to give to the northern section a preponderance in every department of the Government, and thereby concentrate in it the two elements which constitute the Federal Government—majority of States, and a majority of their population estimated in federal numbers. Whatever section concentrates the two in itself possesses the control of the entire Government.

But we are just at the close of the sixth decade, and the commencement of the seventh. The census is to be taken this year, which must add greatly to the decided preponderance of the north in the House of Representatives and in the electoral college. The prospect is, also, that a great increase will be added to its preponderance in the Senate during the period of the decade by the addition of new States. Two Territories, Oregon and Minnesota, are already in progress, and strenuous efforts are making to bring in three additional States from the territory recently conquered from Mexico; which, if successful, will add three States in a short time to the Northern section, making five States; and increasing the present number of States from fifteen to twenty, and of its Senators from thirty to forty. On the contrary, there is not a single Territory in progress in the southern section, and as certainty that any additional State will be added to it during the decade. The prospect then is, that the two sections in the Senate, should the efforts to exclude the South from the newly-acquired territories succeed, will stand before the end of the decade, twenty-one northern States to fourteen southern, (considering Delaware as neutral); and forty-two northern Senators to twenty-eight southern. This great increase of Senators, added to the great increase of members of the House of Representatives and electoral college on the part of the North, which must take place under the next decade, will effectually and irretrievably destroy the equilibrium which existed when the Government commenced.

Had this destruction been the operation of time, without the interference of Government, the South would have had no reason to complain; but such was not the fact. It was caused by the legislation of this Government, which was appointed as the common agent of all, and charged with the protection of the interests and security of all. The legislation by which it has been effected may be classed under three heads. The first is, that series of acts by which the South has been excluded from the common territory belonging to all of the States, as the members of the Federal Union, and which have had the effect of extending vastly the portion allotted to the northern section, and restricting within narrow limits the portion left the South. The next consists in adopting a system of revenue and disbursements, by which an undue proportion of the burden of taxation has been imposed upon the South, and an undue proportion of its proceeds appropriated to the North, and the last is a system of political measures, by which the original character of the Government has been radically changed. I propose to bestow upon each of these, in the order they stand, a few remarks, with the view of showing that it is owing to the action of this Government that the equilibrium between the two sections has been destroyed, and the whole powers of the system centered in a sectional majority.

The first of the series of acts by which the South was deprived of its due share of the Territories originated with the Confederacy, which preceded the existence of this Government. It is to be found in the provision of the ordinance of 1787. Its effect was to exclude the South entirely from that vast and fertile region which lies between the Ohio and the Mississippi rivers, now embracing five States and one Territory. The next of the series is the Missouri compromise, which excluded the South from that large portion of Louisiana which lies north of 36° 30', excepting what is included in the State of Missouri. The last of the series excluded the South from the whole of the Oregon Territory. All these, in the slang of the day, were what are called slave territories, and not free soil; that is, ter-

ritories belonging to slaveholding powers, and open to the emigration of masters with their slaves. By these several acts, the South was excluded from 1,338,025 square miles, an extent of country considerably exceeding the entire valley of the Mississippi. To the South was left the portion of the Territory of Louisiana lying south of 36° 30', including the States of Louisiana and Arkansas, and the territory lying west of the latter and south of 36° 30', called the Indian country. These, with the Territory of Florida, now the State, make in the whole 283,593 square miles. To this must be added the territory acquired with Texas. If the whole should be added to the southern section, it would make an increase of 325,520, which would make the whole left to the South 609,023. But a large part of Texas is still in contest between the two sections, which leaves it uncertain what will be the real extent of the portion of territory that may be left to the South.

I have not included the territory recently acquired by the treaty with Mexico. The North is making the most strenuous efforts to appropriate the whole to herself, by excluding the South from every foot of it. If she should succeed, it will add to that from which the South has already been excluded 526,078 square miles, and would increase the whole which the North has appropriated to herself to 1,134,023, not including the portion that she may succeed in excluding us from in Texas. To sum up the whole, the United States, since they declared their independence, have acquired 2,373,046 square miles of territory, from which the North will have excluded the South, if she should succeed in monopolizing the newly-acquired territories, about three-fourths of the whole, leaving to the South but about one-fourth.

Such is the first and great cause that has destroyed the equilibrium between the two sections in the Government.

The next is the system of revenue and disbursements which has been adopted by the Government. It is well known that the Government has derived its revenue mainly from duties on imports. I shall not undertake to show that such duties must necessarily fall mainly on the exporting States, and that the South, as the great exporting portion of the Union, has in reality paid vastly more than her due proportion of the revenue; because I deem it unnecessary, as the subject has on so many occasions been fully discussed. Nor shall I, for the same reason, undertake to show that a far greater portion of the revenue has been disbursed at the North than its due share; and that the portion of these disbursements has been to transfer a vast amount from South to North, which, under an equal system of revenue and disbursements, would not have been lost to her. If, to this be added, that many of the duties were imposed, not for revenue, but for protection—that is, intended to put money, not in the treasury, but directly into the pocket of the manufacturers, some exceptions may be formed of the immense amount which, in the long course of sixty years, have been transferred from South to North. There are no data by which it can be estimated with any certainty; but it is safe to say, that it amounts to hundreds of millions of dollars. Under the most moderate estimate, it would be sufficient to add greatly to the wealth of the North, and thus greatly increase her population by attracting emigration from all quarters to that section.

This, combined with the great and primary cause, amply explains why the North has acquired a preponderance over every department of the Government by its disproportionate increase of population and States. The former, as has been shown, has increased in fifty years 2,400,000 over that of the South. This increase of population, during so long a period, as satisfactorily accounted for, by the number of emigrants, and the increase of their descendants, which have been attracted to the northern section from Europe and the South, in consequence of the advantages derived from the cause assigned. If they had not existed—if the South had retained all the capital which has been extracted from her by the fiscal action of the Government; and, if it had not been excluded by the ordinance of '87 and the Missouri compromise, from the region lying between the Ohio and the Mississippi rivers, and between the Mississippi and the Rocky mountains north of 36° 30'—it scarcely admits of a doubt, that it would have divided the emigration with the North, and by retaining her own people, would have at least equaled the North in population under the census of 1840, and probably under that about to be taken. She would also, if she had retained her equal rights in those Territories, have maintained an equality in the number of States with the North, and have preserved the equilibrium between the sections that existed at the commencement of the Government. The loss then of the equilibrium is to be attributed to the action of this Government.

But while these measures were destroying the equilibrium between the two sections, the action of the Government was leading to a radical change in its character, by concentrating all the power of the system in itself. The occasion will not permit me to trace the measures by which this great change has been consummated. If it did, it would not be difficult to show that the process commenced at an early period of the Government; that it proceeded, almost without interruption, step by step, until it absorbed virtually its entire powers; but without going through the whole process to establish the fact, it may be done satisfactorily by a very short statement.

That the Government claims, and particularly maintains, the right to decide in the last resort, as to the extent of its powers, will scarcely be denied by any one conversant with

the political history of the country. That it also claims the right to resort to force to maintain whatever power she claims, against all opposition, is equally certain. Indeed it is apparent, from what we daily hear, that this has become the prevailing and fixed opinion of a great majority of the community.

Now, I ask, what limitation can possibly be placed upon the powers of a Government claiming and exercising such rights? And note can be, how can the separate governments of the States maintain and protect the powers reserved to them by the Constitution or the people of the several States maintain those which are reserved to them, and among others the sovereign powers by which they obtained and established not only their separate State constitutions and governments, but also the Constitution and Government of the United States? But if they have no constitutional means of maintaining them against the right claimed by this Government, it necessarily follows that they hold them at its pleasure and discretion, and that all the powers of the system are in reality concentrated in it. It also follows that the character of the Government has been changed in consequence from a Federal republic, as it originally came from the hands of its framers, and that it has been changed into a great national consolidated democracy. It has, indeed, at present, all the characteristics of the latter, and but one of the former, although it still retains its outward form.

The result of the whole of these causes combined is, that the North has acquired a decided ascendancy over every department of this Government, and through it a control over all the powers of this system. A single section governed by the will of the numerical majority, has, in fact, the control of the Government and the entire powers of the system. What was once a constitutional Federal Republic, is now converted, in reality, into one as absolute as that of the Autocrat of Russia, and as despotic in its tendency, as any absolute government that ever existed.

As, then, the North has the absolute control over the Government, it is manifest, that on all questions between it and the South, where there are a diversity of interests, the interest of the latter will be sacrificed to that of the former, however oppressive the effects may be, as the South possesses no means by which it can resist, through the action of the Government. But if there was no question of importance to the South, in reference to which there was a diversity of views between the two sections, this state of things might be endured, without the hazard of destruction to the South. But such is not the case. There is a question of vital importance to the Southern section, in reference to which the views and feelings of the two sections are as opposite and hostile as they can possibly be.

I refer to the relation between the two races in the Southern section which constitutes a vital portion of her social organization. Every portion of the North entertains views and feelings more or less hostile to it. Those most opposed and hostile, regard it as a sin, and consider themselves under the most sacred obligation to use every effort to destroy it. Indeed, to the extent that they conceive they have power, they regard themselves as implicated in the sin, and responsible for suppressing it by the use of all and every means. These less opposed and hostile, regard it as a crime—an offence against humanity, as they call it; and although not so fanatical, feel themselves bound to use all efforts to effect the same object: while those who are least opposed and hostile, regard it as a blot and a stain on the character of what they call the Nation, and feel themselves accordingly bound to give it no countenance or support. On the contrary, the Southern section regards the relation existing between the two races to be the greatest calamity, and the section to poverty, desolation and wretchedness; and accordingly, they feel bound, by every consideration of interest and safety to defend it.

This hostile feeling on the part of the North towards the social organization of the South, long lay dormant, but it only required some cause which would make the impression on those who felt it most intensely, that they were responsible for its continuance, to call it into action. The increasing power of this Government, and of the control of the Northern section over all its departments, furnished the cause. It was this which made an impression on the minds of many, that there was little or no restraint to prevent the Government from doing whatever it might choose to do. This was sufficient of itself to put the most fanatical portion of the North in action for the purpose of destroying the existing relations between the two races in the South.

The first organized movement towards it commenced in 1835. Then, for the first time, societies were organized, presses established, lecturers sent for to excite the people of the North, and incendiary publications scattered over the whole South, through the mail. The South was thoroughly aroused. Meetings were held every where, and resolutions adopted, calling upon the North to apply a remedy to arrest the threatened evil, and pledging themselves to adopt measures for their own protection, if it was not arrested. At the meeting of Congress petitions poured in from the North, calling upon Congress to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia, and to prohibit what they called the internal slave trade between the States, announcing, at the same time, that their ultimate object was to abolish slavery, not only in the District, but in the States and throughout the Union. At this period, the number engaged in the agitation was small, and possessed little or no personal influence.

Neither party in Congress had at that time, any sympathy with them, or their cause. The members of each party presented their petitions with great reluctance. Nevertheless, as small and contemptible as the party then was, both of the great parties of the North dreaded them. They felt that, though small, they were organized in reference to a subject which had a great and a commanding influence over the northern mind. Each party, on that account, feared to oppose their petitions, lest the opposite party should take advantage of the one who might do so, by favoring their petitions. The effect was that both united in insisting that the petitions should be received, and that Congress should take jurisdiction of the subject for which they prayed. To justify their course, they took the extraordinary ground, that Congress was bound to receive petitions on every subject, however objectionable it might be, and whether they had or had not jurisdiction over the subject. These views prevailed in the House of Representatives, and partially in the Senate, and thus the party succeeded in their first movement in gaining what they proposed—a position in Congress, from which agitation could be extended over the whole Union. This was the commencement of the agitation, which has ever since continued, and which, as is now acknowledged, has endangered the Union itself.

As for myself, I believed at that early period, if the party who got up the petitions should succeed in getting Congress to take jurisdiction, that agitation would follow, and that it would, in the end, if not arrested, destroy the Union. I then expressed myself in debate, and called upon both parties to take grounds against assuming jurisdiction; but in vain. Had my voice been heeded, and had Congress refused to take jurisdiction, by the united votes of all parties, the agitation which followed would have been prevented, and the fanatical zeal that gives impulse to the agitation, and which has brought us to our present perilous condition, would have become extinguished from the want of something to feed the flame. That was the time for the North to show her devotion to the Union; but, unfortunately, both of the great parties of that section were so intent on obtaining or retaining party ascendancy, that all other considerations were overlooked or forgotten.

What has since followed are but the natural consequences. With the success of their first movement this small fanatical party began to acquire strength; and, with that, to become an object of courtship to both the great parties. The necessary consequence was, a further increase of power, and gradual tainting of the opinions of both the other parties with their doctrines, until the infection has extended over both; and the great mass of the population of the North, who whatever may be their opinion of the original Abolition party, which still preserves its distinctive organization, hardly ever fail, when it comes to acting, to co-operate in carrying out their measures. With the increase of their influence they extended the sphere of their action. In a short time after the commencement of their first movement, they had acquired sufficient influence to induce the Legislatures of most of the northern States to pass acts which in effect abrogated the provision of the Constitution that provides for the delivery up of fugitive slaves. Not long after, petitions followed to abolish slavery in forts, magazines, and dockyards, and all other places where Congress had exclusive power of legislation. This was followed by petitions and resolutions of Legislatures of the northern States and popular meetings, to exclude the southern States from all Territories acquired, or to be acquired, and to prevent the admission of any State hereafter into the Union, which, by its constitution, does not prohibit slavery. And Congress is invoked to all this expressly with the view to the final abolition of slavery in the States. That has been a vowed to be the ultimate object from the beginning of the agitation until the present time; and yet the great body of both parties of the North, with the full knowledge of the facts, although disavowing the Abolitionists, have co-operated with them in almost all their measures.

Such is a brief history of the agitation, as far as it has yet advanced. Now I ask, Senators, what is there to prevent its further progress, until it fulfils the ultimate end proposed, unless some decisive measure should be adopted to prevent it? Has any one of the causes, which has added to its increase from its original small and contemptible beginning until it has attained its present magnitude, diminished in force? Is the original cause of the movement, that slavery is a sin, and ought to be suppressed, weaker now than at the commencement? Or is the Abolition party less numerous or influential, or have they less influence over, or control over the two great parties of the North in elections? Or has the South greater means of influencing or controlling the movement of this Government now, than it had when the agitation commenced? To all these questions but one answer can be given: No, no, no. The very reverse is true. Instead of being weaker, all the elements in favor of agitation are stronger now than they were in 1835, when it first commenced, while all the elements of influence on the part of the South are weaker. Unless something decisive is done, I again ask, what is to stop this agitation, before the great and final object at which it aims—the abolition of slavery in the States—is consummated? Is it, then, not certain that if something decisive is not now done to arrest it, the South will be forced to choose between abolition and secession? Indeed, as things are now moving, it will not require

the South to secede to dissolve the Union. Agitation will of itself effect it, of which its past history furnishes abundant proof, as I shall next proceed to show.

It is a great mistake to suppose that disunion can be effected by a single blow. The cords which bind these States together in one common Union are far too numerous and powerful for that. Disunion must be the work of time. It is only through a long process, and gradually, that the cords can be snapped, until the whole fabric falls asunder. Already the agitation of the slavery question has snapped some of the most important, and has greatly weakened all others, as I shall proceed to show.

The cords that bind the States together are not only many, but various in character. Some are spiritual or ecclesiastical; some political; others social. Some appertain to the heart conferred by the Union, and others to the feeling of duty and obligation.

The strongest of those of a spiritual and ecclesiastical nature, consisted in the unity of the great religious denominations, all of which originally embraced the whole Union. All these denominations, with the exception, perhaps, of the Catholics, were organized very much upon the principle of our political institutions; beginning with smaller meetings corresponding with the political divisions of the country, their organization terminated in one great central assembly, corresponding very much with the character of Congress. At these meetings the principal clergymen and lay members of the respective denominations from all parts of the Union met, to transact business relating to their concerns. It was not confined to what appertained to the doctrines and discipline of the respective denominations, but extended to plans for disseminating the Bible, sending out missionaries, distributing tracts, and establishing presses for the publication of tracts, newspapers and periodicals, with a view of diffusing religious information, and for the support of the doctrine and creed of the denomination. All these combined, contributed greatly to strengthen the bonds of the Union. The strong ties which held each denomination together, formed a strong cord to hold the whole Union together; but, as powerful as they were, they have not been able to resist the explosive effort of the slavery agitation.

The first of these cords which snapped under its explosive force, was that of the powerful Methodist Episcopal Church. The numerous and strong ties which held it together, are all broke, and its unity gone. They now form separate churches; and, instead of that feeling of attachment and devotion to the interests of the whole Church, which was formerly felt, they are now arrayed into two hostile bodies, engaged in litigation about what was formerly their common property.

The next cord that snapped was that of the Baptists, one of the largest and most respectable of the denominations. That of the Presbyterian is not entirely snapped, but some of its strands have given away. That of the Episcopal Church is the only one of the four great Protestant denominations which remains unbroken and entire.

The strongest cord of a political character, consists of the many and strong ties that have held together the two great parties which have, with some modifications, existed from the beginning of the Government. They both extended to every portion of the Union, and strongly contributed to hold all its parts together. But this powerful cord has parted no better than the spiritual. It resisted for a long time the explosive tendency of the agitation, but has finally snapped under its force—if not entirely, in a great measure. Nor is there one of the remaining cords which have not been greatly weakened. To this extent the Union has already been destroyed by agitation, in the only way it can be, by snapping asunder and weakening the cords which bind them together.

If the agitation goes on, the same fury, acting with increased intensity, as has been shown, will finally snap every cord, where nothing will be left to hold the States together except force. But, surely, that can be no permanent property of language, or action, when the only means by which the weakness is held connected with the stronger portions of force. It may, indeed, keep them connected, but the connection will partake much more of the character of subjugation, on the part of the weaker to the stronger, than the union of free, independent and sovereign States, in one Federal Union, as they stood in the early stages of the Government, and which only a worthy of the sacred name of the Union.

Having now, Senators, explained what it is that endangers the Union, and traced to its cause, and explained its nature and character, the question again recurs: How can the Union be saved? To this I answer, there is but one way by which it can be, and that is, by adopting such measures as will satisfy the States belonging to the Southern section that they can remain in the Union consistently with their honor and their safety. There is, again, only one way by which that can be effected, and that is by removing the causes by which this belief has been produced. Do that, and disunion will cease, harmony and kind feelings between the sections be restored, and every apprehension of danger to the Union be removed. The question then is: by what can this be done? But, before I undertake to answer this question, I propose to show by what the Union cannot be saved.

It cannot, then, be saved by eulogies on the Union, however splendid or numerous. The cry of "Union, Union—the glorious Union!" can no more prevent disunion than the cry of "Health, health—glorious health!"